

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

O.H. 62

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AMY BALL CROFT

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

January 2, 1980

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SUBJECT:

DATE: 2 January 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

Y: This is an interview with Mrs. Amy B. Croft for the Historical Society of Palm Desert at her home at 71835 Serra Road in Rancho Mirage. Today is January 2, Wednesday, 1980, and it's two thirty in the afternoon.

First I think we should talk just generally about when you came to Rancho Mirage, what it was like, what you were doing, where you came from, why.

C: Turn it off a minute.

Y: Okay.

C: No, you know what this is? This is September 1928, and that's about in, oh, my boys..

Y: Oh!

C: You didn't know about my boys.

Y: I understood that you had various children living with you.

C: No, not exactly living with me, but (papers rustling)
oh, here's something about . . . let's get . . . are your
in the doctor . . . her name (phone ringing)

Y: Where was this school?

C: In Palm Springs. There was just one little school on
Canyon Drive, and you can . . . is that on? And they,
the children, there were a lot of children down at the
campground. Their mothers had TB and they, you know,
were camping down there. And the children had nobody
to take care of them or anything. They just run around,
and then they sent them to school because they made them
go. And they, mothers had tuberculosis and they'd see
them out there on a cot, nobody knew what to do for it.
But they was in hopes sun would help them which it did.
And so there was a woman doctor in Palm Springs. She had
a home up there, and she and Dr. Helm lived together.
And she was not only a physician, she was a surgeon. And
she knew, went down and tried all she could for those
people and for all the Indians. And the Indians in those
days had no help of any kind, you know, and they camped
out or they had their little shacks or something. And so
she went to the school board and told them that she
wanted those children, she wanted a cafeteria, and that

she thought if enough of the children, I think there were supposed to be under two hundred in the whole school, that they probably would be enough to almost cover the cost of the food. And she had a person that she knew that would go and help her, you know, and take in charge of it. And the services wouldn't cost the school anything. And so they gave in. I don't think the teachers liked it too well, you know, but there was a pavillion, it was just a roof, and it was outside. And they closed it in for us. And I told Dr. Stillman I'd go, you know, and fix it for her. And so we put in a wood stove and a gasoline stove and she and I bought kettles and soup bones and the soup bowls to make soup. And all we intended to serve was soup and crackers and milk. And I went to the Armstrong Dairy. I had taken from him and I was acquainted with him, and I told him what I wanted the milk for. And I said, "How much will you charge for the milk?" And he said, well, one thing was he'd have to buy the half-pint bottles, but he could do that. And he said he'd think it over and then he'd let me know how much it would be. And when I saw him the next time, why, he said that it wasn't going to cost us anything for the milk. And so that's all we expected to do. She and I got the bowls

and the spoons. There wasn't so many children, you know. We didn't think in the cafeteria there would ever be over five or ten, but there were. They came, there were about fifteen was the most we ever got. And so we took and for the first day we went, they told all through the school that there would be a cafeteria and there would be milk and soup. And the children, we found out right away that didn't have any money, we rounded them up and they got their soup and milk, but we didn't make it so the other children knew, you know.

Y: Right.

C: And so that's what we did. And that went along for about two years. And then finally the school, they enlarged the school and it got larger, and so they built a room for the cafeteria. But we had everything for it handy. We had two stoves and we had plenty of benches, you know, and places to sit down and a place to handle it. And at one time, on just what little we had to sell, why we had four hundred dollars in the bank. And I'm going to put something in now that some people won't like, but it's the truth. There were a group of people down at the Desert Inn and they thought that we were making money maybe and getting rich on five-cent bowls of soup and all, so

they come down and they paid fifty cents to take and join the PTA. See this was run and managed by the PTA, but Dr. Stillman and I really ran it, you know, and did all the work and everything. And so they joined the PTA for fifty cents and then they outvoted us and they wanted the cafeteria turned over to a group taken out of the PTA and they killed the PTA. We were, you know, registered with the national one and they killed the PTA in Palm Springs. There was no more of it. And so anyhow, and they voted Dr. Stillman out. And, of course, I quit. I worked because Dr. Stillman was there. And she took care of all the sick and all the ill and all the people that had no money, you know, in the whole city. And at that time the people were very anxious to get rid of the Indians, too, although it was Indian lands, you know. And so anyway, that's what we did. And the children really had something to eat. If they had money, they got it. If they didn't have money, they got it anyway.

Y: What year was this?

C: Yes, well, it's here, September the twenty-ninth, 1928. And I said, so she went to the school board, this is Dr. Stillman, and told them some of the children from the section called, did not have anything to eat, and told

them we wanted to take and serve soup and milk for five cents or nothing, if they don't have the money. I told her I would see what the milk would cost for, he would have to buy the half-pint bottles. It was Armstrong Dairy and he said I could have all the milk for the children free. But we had to make a rich soup and buy the crackers. This is the end of that. And as long as we ran the dairy, why he gave the milk free. What they did when they made it and turned it over to the school board, why I don't know because we both walked out.

Y: I was curious, where was the camp that you're talking about where these women had tuberculosis?

C: Well, I could tell you if I was in Palm Springs, but I've forgotten. But it was right between, it was on Indian Avenue. Everything on this side of Indian, you know, was Indian land. It all was owned by the Indians, and of course, on the other side of Indian Avenue, was, belonged to the city or who owned it, you know. And it was down on Indian Avenue, right in the middle of Palm Springs and a man there that had been brought in to take care of such stuff as hauling off stuff and garbaga and all this, you know, why he had tents and places that he rented right on the corner there, and that's where those

people that had TB, and of course in those days they knew nothing about what to do for it. All they came was the sun, you know. And, of course, those children were around them and exposed all the time, and then if they didn't get them, who was feeding them, you know. And, of course, one meal wasn't enough, but it helped.

Y: Where was the Armstrong Dairy that you mentioned?

C: It was in Banning. They came from Banning and they served this whole area.

Y: Long ways away.

C: Yes. It was, well, they had other places along the way, you know, that they, they had a big dairy, you know. Their milk was good and . . . but he gave us the milk.

Y: What brought you and your husband to Palm Springs originally?

C: Well, we lived in Los Angeles and the work failed. He was a builder, contractor-builder, and the work failed. And so a friend of his had come up here and he had quite a bit of building that he had contracted and he wanted Mr. Croft to go in with him. And Palm Springs grew fast, you know, and until the day that he was ill, why he had more than he could do anyway. And he liked it; he loved the desert. And I tolerated it. But I never said a word,

but I did, I wrote a poem on the ocean. But I never gave to my husband to read until long years afterward.

But it was really what I thought of the ocean. (laughter)

Y: How did you happen to move to Rancho Mirage?

C: Well, I never liked Palm Springs, so we built a house there and we leased the land and built a house. And then I wanted to get out of there, out of Palm Springs, and we sold the house and we went down to Riverside and we, I'll say we, we bought a house down there. And so we lived, we moved down there, the children and I, but Mr. Croft never went. He had, he built the Kersten ranch and, boy, that was just years and years of building, you know, two houses and all the storage and everything. And we became very close friends. My daughter, you know, married the only son of the Kerstens. And so he was working here, you see, but we did go back to Palm Springs from Riverside and I sold the house in Riverside. And then we built another house on leased land there and then all of his work turned up down here. Things began to boom, you know. And so we didn't move right away, but this house, the woman had died, and the house was empty and I went down and looked at it and there wasn't another house in the whole area for rent or none to rent or buy

or anything, you know, just a few people here. And so there was a card on the door. So I took the card off. And there was an address that this woman had died and I knew she died, but she had an apartment in Los Angeles in the west side, very beautiful apartment. And so I took the card out because I wanted the house. And I went home and went to the phone and called, and asked, you know, if there was anybody there now. No, there wasn't. Well, I got ready and went down there anyhow. And when I went up the steps, it was up the steps and you had to ring and they had to open and let you up, and so I was sitting there waiting because the woman wasn't home, but she'd just be gone, you know, a few minutes. And I said I'd wait. And this was in West Los Angeles. And she didn't come, but another lady came and she lived there. And she said, "What are you waiting for?" And there was a nice place to sit. There was a level place there and bench and so forth. And it had a phone there, you know. They could talk there. And so she said, "You come on up and go with me." And I said to her, "Did you know Mrs. Hawks?" "Oh, yes," she said, "she was my dearest friend." And so I thought, this is the person I need, you know. So I said to her, "Well,

I don't have her brother's address." "Oh, I have, you come on up to my room and I'll give it to you." So she gave me his address and his name and everything, and I got away as quick as I could and went to a phone and called him on the phone. And I said to him, I told him who I was, and I said, "Your sister, I heard, passed away." And he said, "Yes, she did." And he said, "I've been awful busy. I should have been out there, but I haven't." And I said, "Well, it hasn't been watered and some of the things are dying," and I said, "It doesn't do you any good empty." And I said, "I'd like to buy it." "Well," he said, "I can't really sell it because there's some difficulty in the courts," but he said, "there's no other person that has any claim at all. There's nobody but her and I and she's gone." And he said, "I know everything is all right." "Well," I said, "we could make some agreement." I said, "I'd like to rent it then, and maybe the rent could go on the sale price when you, you know, decide what you're going to do." "Well," he said, "if I had a place to stay," it was during, I don't know when, but anyway, the places weren't, you know, plentiful, and he said, "If I had a place to stay, I'd come out there." I said, "I got a place to stay. I got an eight-room

house in Riverside." See, I still had the Riverside house. And I said, "You can stay with me and I'll meet you wherever you want me to meet you and take you off the train or off of the bus or whatever you want and any time, and you can stay with me." So he said, "Well, there's a car down there I want." And I thought, "Yes, I can use that car, too." And so I went and met him and I guess I was a little nervous and I started forward, you know, instead of backing, you know, just a step, you know, and he said, and I'll never know how he knew it, but he said, "You're a damn democrat," he said. And I said, "Well, I am, but how did you know that?" "Well," he said, "I just know when you start when you're not supposed to start." He said. (laughter) And so I took him home and the two girls were home. It was Kathryn and Barbara. They were home. And I said to him, "They'll have dinner ready when we get home." And so he said, "All right." So the next day we went out and then we hunted up his car. And somebody had broke the window, you know, the front door window, and stole a fur coat out of it. And he said that his sister had told him when she was sick, you know, she wrote that her coat was in there. And they broke the window in order to get into

the car. And it was in a garage and so he finally got it out and we went, I took him, to the motor vehicle company. It's out along, I think, about thirty blocks out in Los Angeles, and so that he could get it changed over into his name. And so they took care of that for him and they gave him, gasoline was rationed, and but he got gasoline to go home, to go to my place then, you know. And so he came, I took him to Riverside where we were living. And the next morning we came down here to the house, but in the meantime, before all this happened, he, I had called him, you know, immediately that I'd found out who he was and all about it. And he had a man that was coming down here, a photographer that had all his stuff stored in this room here, and he had wanted to come down and get it out. And so he told him to bring me down. So I had seen the house then before he came, you know, been in it. And so, well, to make a long story short, there was trouble with him getting control of it because he had to advertise for so many days, you know, and so anyhow, we just moved in. And we told him that we wanted to pay rent, and he said, no, we'd fix it up, you know, a little. Why then if I'd fixed it up, why then it would be all right. And if we wanted to buy it,

why we could buy it. And, well, we needed more room because my son was with me then and the two girls. So we had an agreement, and we built this building here on and we this was all here, but not the wall, you know. That's the bedroom wall there. But on this side is this bedroom wall. And so we built this. And we had the agreement that he would pay us, I didn't have to pay any rent, but he would pay us for the material, but he wouldn't pay anything for labor. And we built these two buildings, you see. Well, I needed it, and I needed it quick, you know. And then I went back and stayed until I sold my house, then came on up. But he stayed here. And it had several pieces of furniture in. It wasn't, you know, crowded furnished, but it had, it was enough you could live in it. And of course I had my furniture down there and had to bring it down when I moved. So anyway, that's how it was. And he put a fair price on the place. I really don't remember in just figures, you know, I can't remember exactly because he took some certain things and he allowed so much for that. There was a lot of *finagling* and it was all good. And so we knew, that was 1942. And we moved in and after that we corresponded, you know, but I don't know, finally,

I don't know whether he died or what. He wasn't a young man, you know.

Y: What was the area around here like when you

C: Well, it was all vacant. There was nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, between us and the mountains. That was all vacant land through there. Up higher there was a few houses, farther up, and almost out of Rancho Mirage there was two or three houses. But that was all. And I think maybe I couldn't tell you exactly how many people. And, of course, all this was empty, all this that is built up now. That was vacant up until now, you know. But that was all empty. And, of course, there was no lights. Those lights down here were put in after we moved in, but I guess they had the ones that came out of Cathedral, you know. And there wasn't many people, so that that's about all I know about it. We had, of course, our grocer, we had no grocery here. They had a grocery over in Palm Desert and Palm Desert was, you know, just a little place. It didn't have much either. And I don't know, they wanted to take us over. Palm Desert wanted to take us over, and of course, I fought that tooth and nail, and won. (chuckle)

Y: Tell them about that.

C: What?

Y: Tell a little about that whole . . .

C: Well, you see Palm Desert didn't think much of Rancho Mirage. They thought it ever wasn't going to grow up and it wasn't going to do much and they wanted to get ahold of it, so they wanted to take and take it over with them. And they brought a suit, you know, to transfer it and we fought it. And, of course, I was right, I hate to say this, but there's the saying, if Amy's on the committee, it wins. (laughter) But I think it's not because I was so smart, because I worked harder.

Y: You were telling me earlier about them getting the bridge over Rio Patron.

C: Yes, and I, oh, I didn't tell you since this.

Y: No.

C: Well, I'll tell you, we were fighting for the bridge. I really was fighting for it. I was a member then. I was in the Chamber of Commerce. I've always been working in the Chamber of Commerce. Of course, the last couple of years I haven't done much of anything, you know. But the Chamber of Commerce made me for my ninetieth birthday, I had five parties. The Women's Club gave me a party. The County Central Committee, I've been on that since

1953, that's the Democratic County Central, and they gave me a party. And there were thirty-three to that. And there was one other party, and then the Chamber of Commerce gave me a party, and there was one hundred guests on my ninetieth birthday. On my ninety-first birthday, I had two parties, and the Chamber of Commerce gave me a life membership.

Y: That's wonderful!

C: They wouldn't take my money anymore. (chuckle)

Y: So you were very instrumental in getting the . . .

C: Well, the bridge, I got the bridge. There's no doubt about that. The thing was that everybody wanted it. Palm Springs wanted the bridge, and Cathedral wanted it. It was all on the white-water wash, you know. And they wanted it even in Indio. See, that wash goes clear down to Indio. And Palm Desert fought tooth and nail. And I went to the Chamber. Of course, I was on the Chamber of Commerce, and they helped me and stood back of me, you know. And so finally they got the Army engineers from Washington to come out and to look at the situation because all five places was fighting for the same thing. And there was only going to be one bridge. And so Chuck M. Billie was the president of the Chamber of Commerce,

and he was one fine president. He was, I think, for two terms. And he called me and said, "Amy, I'm going in." I was the chairman of the roads and bridges. And so he said, "Do you want to go in with me? They're going to have a meeting in Palm Springs," and he said, "It's on the bridge and I want you to go." And I said, "Sure, I want to be there. I been working like a fool on that thing and I want it to come through." And so he said, "Okay." So he picked me up and we went on in. And I think there were six members in it, and then the chairman. And so when we went in, they came in in a few minutes and the meeting started. And he said that they had come out from Washington and they had the decision to see where the bridge should be made. And so they'd come out, they'd gone out in the morning and looked at the situation and knew something about it. And they would like, they thought they'd like to have me talk first because I was the only lady on the Commission, you know. And so I got up and I said that the people were helpless when the water came down there, why it was a flood and they couldn't get in and they couldn't get out. The mail had to go clear on over to the highway and then come around and back, drive thirty-seven miles to get a

half a mile. And the men couldn't get out to go to work, and the children couldn't get out to go to school. And there had to be something done about it. And I said that Rio Del Sol, I said, is where the bridge should go. The bridge anywhere else wouldn't help my area. And I said I thought that would help everybody's area because it would give them a way to go in and a way to go out. And then I said, furthermore, I said, Rio Del Sol is the only federal bridge, and it's the only one that you can get any money on to build a bridge. And another thing, I said, that is the shortest route and it will take the smaller bridge than at anyplace else on the wash, on the white-water wash. And he said, but when I told him, you know, it was the only one they could get their money on, he said, well, that's it. He said, that's it. It's the only road that . . . See, nobody else brought that up. Nobody talked. So anyway, that's the way I got the bridge. One of the books in here that tells all about it. Pictures and everything. And ^{Imbelle} Billie was the president or the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce.

Y: Now you were also beginning to tell me about the first dinner at the airline. ^{Erawan won}

C: Oh. The Airwon was being built and I don't know for some reason I just thought it was a most wonderful thing some way. The way it was built and everything. And I had gone down and I, of course, being married to a builder, you know, I liked buildings and I'd gone in and looked at it and talked to the man that was the head there. And I thought, oh, boy, this is really a place. You see, we had no place in Rancho Mirage, you know, to handle a crowd. So when John Tunney, that was the first meeting, the first dinner that he got. And they'd sent John up to see me and his secretary, he was an attorney, and his secretary was a friend of mine. And, of course, I suppose she told him to come up and see Amy. And so she called me in the morning and asked if I was busy. "No," I said, "I'm not busy." Well, she said, "Verrick Tunney wants to come see you." And I said, "Oh, all right. What time?" And she said, "Well, any time that's convenient, but he could come right away." And I said, "Well, that's fine. Just have him come on up." So when he come up, I don't know, but some way just seeing him, I just wasn't too impressed, and I think the name Verrick got me down. And so he sat down and he talked to me and told me what he had done. He was an attorney and he told

me about his family and all. And we visited, and I said, "Don't you have any name but Verrick?" He said, "Oh, that's my mother's name." He said, "That's my mother's name. I couldn't do anything about Verrick." "Well," I said, "You want to get elected, don't you? You'll never get elected with a name Verrick." I said, "What other name do you have?" "John," he said. "Oh." Of course, that happened to be my favorite name. And I said, "John, you can get elected with John." You'll never get elected with Verrick." And he wouldn't have. And so he said, "No." And he had two red spots here. I dropped it, you know. I told him, and that was it. So I took him down then. We had several clubs. And I took him down and introduced him to the president, went to their homes and introduced him and then I introduced him to the businessmen. You've got to have them in because you've got to get money. And so I took him. We spent almost the whole day. We come back then in the afternoon and he drove me in his car. And when I come back, why he said, "Goodbye." And I said, "Goodbye." And he said, "Thank you." And he still had those two red spots on his cheek. He was still mad. And instead of making me angry at him, I thought that guy, he's got something to him.

He gets mad, he knows what he gets mad about, and he don't change his mind, and I like that. And because when you're elected and in an office, you get mad a good many times, and you don't want to be, you know, knocked out of it. So anyway I never said anymore. I never heard anything from him. I think that was a Thursday. And so Monday morning, why after the phone rang, and his secretary called me. And she said, "Amy, are you going to be home?" And I said, "Yes, I'm going to be home. What can I do for you?" "Well," she said, "John wants to come down and see you." (cough) That was John Tunney. So I said, "Fine." And I never . . . it was just John from them on. There was never anything to it, you know. And he's one of the finest men that we've ever had in any office in sixty-five years. He's actually a fine person, and I still haven't given up seeing him in the White House.

Y: What about the dinner at the Airway? Getting back to . . .

C: Well, getting back to that, that was the first dinner for John. And we had upstairs, I haven't been in it for years, but upstairs, you could partition off so there were three dining areas that would hold quite a few people, you know. So I took one from them. And

they had lowered the meals down from eight dollars to five dollars for me for the . . . because it was a, you know, fund-warming thing. But when I gave a dinner for anybody, I didn't care so I came out even. I didn't care about the money. I cared about the people.

(Pounded on table). People was what I wanted. You can always in some way get money, but you can't always get people. And so that's what I wanted. I don't care if you don't make a cent on the dinner if you can just slide out and on that dinner I made, if you will believe, fifteen dollars. And that was on the liquor and not on the food. It was a beautiful dinner and they charged us five dollars apiece. And there was sixty-five, no, that isn't right. It was more people than that. I would say there were ninety-five people there. But where the money value was, was that we had so many candidates and those you don't charge. We had freeloaders, you know. That's why we only got fifteen dollars because I have an idea that we had about fifteen people that were guests. But that didn't bother me a bit as long as I come out. And the fifteen dollars we got on the liquor. But it was a beautiful dinner. And I wanted it different from every dinner that had ever been given. And so that's

where this man comes in. I had met him and made him a postmaster.

Y: Who is this now?

C: This is McMann. He was the man that was on the ship and that John Kennedy took and tied a rope under his shoulders and with a broken back he swum with him three miles until he got him out of the water and on the ground. And he had a broken back, John did. And so anyway I got acquainted with him when I was fighting to get him in the post office, you know. And he was already in the post office then, so he really couldn't take any part in the program. I mean, he couldn't work for us or anything. But I had him come and tell John Tunney was in the office of the president at the time, and I had John Kennedy, I mean, and I had him take and tell his story. And I had a moving picture of a half hour of him getting out, they had just had a moving picture made of it. And I got a half hour of that moving picture and had it put on the wall and showed where Kennedy had rescued McMann, you know. And then I had McMann there and he could tell his own experience, you know. That was part of the entertainment.

Y: That's great!

C: (laughter)

Y: So what was the Airlawn^{wan} like when it first opened?

C: Oh, it was beautiful. It really was. And they had a big floor, you know, upstairs. And when I made my reservations for the place, they were thrilled. See, they hadn't been opened yet. And this was the opening and, boy, they were going to start with a big dinner. And they gave me all the help in the world, you know. And I took a third. I took the nearest third. The next morning I called them and I said, "I will have to have the two-thirds." And all right. And then the next day I called him and I said, "I've got to have the whole top floor because I'm getting so many, you know, reservations in, and I've got to have the whole floor." And it was full. There wasn't a seat over anywhere. And we had, we served the liquor, and we got the profit on it, you know. They bought it and sold it. And it was a good thing we had it because that fifteen dollars the liquor made us. And otherwise we would have been fifteen dollars in debt. But I didn't care, you know. All I wanted was, and John Tunney, you know, was there too. And, of course, everybody thought the world of McMann. He was a wonderful man. And, of course, he was so grateful to John Kennedy that he just really worshipped him, you know. And when he died, I thought he would go practically all to pieces.

And he did. He just simply was just struck in the heart.

Y: Where did he work?

C: What?

Y: What post office was he at?

C: He was the Cathedral post office, and I got him in there.

And I got Jerry into this post office, and he's still there. He's the only postman and I got. You see, the others were older. But Pat had lots of faith in me. He knew I knew the people and he knew I was among them, you know, and knew whether they were good, bad or indifferent. And I wouldn't have fought to put somebody in he knew unless the post office was being run wrong, and it was terrible. It had been run as a one-person show, you know.

Y: Locally, you mean?

C: Locally. And I'm a good fighter. (laughter)

Y: I can see.

C: (laughter)

Y: I understand you were in real estate.

C: Oh, yes. I was in real estate. I was, oh, I think I was about, let's see, Dad died in 1965. And I worked, I think I worked about eight years. I worked four years in Cathedral. And then I don't know why I quit there. Evidently I went, I took trips, you know, and evidently

that's why. And then I got the post office over here, was run by a man and his wife. It was really pretty punk, you know. And I went over there and the clerks put their stuff on a shelf, you know, their hat and their lunch and everything on a shelf. And I said to Mrs. Greenleaf, I said, "Isn't there a cupboard for each one of the help here, Mrs. Greenleaf?" And she said, "No, no, it's our cupboards; we've got them full." And I went and opened it, and do you want me to tell you what was in it? Coffee cans, empty coffee cans in the three cupboards that the clerks were supposed to have to put their purse and whatever they had, their hats and coats and so forth. And that day was her downfall because I made up my mind.

Y: When did the post office in Rancho Mirage open?

C: Now wait, didn't I tell, haven't I got it somewhere here? I got the days. Let me see. Here's Palm Springs when it was incorporated. Oh dear. Let me see. This is on my boys. I have it. I'll get it and see it. (papers rustling) This whole thing is on my boys. I had a hundred and eighty-nine boys that I would mother for in the war. Let's see if I can find.

Y: Okay.

C: I maybe see if I can find that and tell you just when it

was, two hundred and eighty acres was the one ranch.

Y: It's over here.

C: The two hundred and eighty acres that the springs is on now was owned by Mr. Kersten. And that was just hills and sand, you know. And he took and leveled it all himself and took and developed it, fruit and grain and everything and built two houses on it. And that was the property, the two hundred and eighty acres, that the springs, that new club and development place has bought. And he, his name was Paul Kersten. And he was married. He had his wife, and then his wife died and he remarried. And he, well, I think it's only about three years that Paul's gone. I could find out.

Y: When did they build the ranch?

C: When did Paul build it?

Y: Thirties?

C: I can't tell you.

Y: It was about the time you moved out here, right?

C: Oh, no. I was out here already. I been thirty-six years out here. I would say it was thirty years ago, give or take thirty years. And he had just had the one son, and that's my son-in-law now. He's a fine boy. Then the father of this little fellow, you know. Approximately

one hundred families living in Rancho Mirage. Frank Morgan had built a beautiful home. You know who Frank Morgan is, don't you? I don't know really. Let's see. You haven't got it on. I could read it again. I'll read it to you first so you see if you want any of it. One hundred families living in Rancho Mirage. Frank Morgan on Sahara had built a beautiful house and was living part of the time in Rancho Mirage. Mr. Button bought the acreage owned by Mr. Dunlap and subdivided it and had it as Annex No. 2, Rancho Mirage. Now that's all this land from right out here where the lights is. All down that way that the . . .

Y: You mean east on 111?

C: Yes. No, the whole thing come up to 111 and then went back.

Y: North.

C: Yes. They, what is it out there? Isn't it the hospital. The hospital's on it. And isn't the high school? No, the College of the Desert is there. Everything's on there. See, this is about it. And had it as Annex No. 2, Rancho Mirage. One-half of the Dunlap property he sold to Amos O'Dell and he built a beautiful home and had a grape and date orchard on it. Afterwards it was sold and

it's now the College of the Desert. It's a good thing I write this dumb stuff down. It's all over the house everywhere. A group of people living in Rancho Mirage formed the Property Owners Association. It is still an active organization up until 1951. Our mail came from Indio and the mailboxes were lined, I got a picture of that in there, were lined on the corner where now is the Standard Oil Station. Well, the Standard Oil Station is even gone now. But it was over, you know, on the belt. And the boxes, we had our boxes there, and they put the mail in for Rancho Mirage and we went and got it on the corner. And was now, in 1951 we had a tiny post office on the corner of 111 and the belt. The small building is still there, but it isn't now. See, I put this down long ago. Estelle Uris was the postmistress. In 1954 we had the second post office, and on October 13, 1962, we had our present post office, dedicated and opened with Sid Greenleaf as postmaster. That's the ones I told you were terrible. They run it as if they owned it. Has been retired (laughter). Well, Sid died, really. He died. He didn't retire from the post office because he died, and then she took it over and she wanted to be postmaster. And, boy. And Sid retired and Jerry, that's

what, we could hardly get him to say he retired and that left her in the office, you see. And that's why I had to fight to get her out. She was no good. I don't mean they stole or anything, but it was just not run right, you know. And retired, and Jerry Egbert became postmaster. And that's one of my boys. And he just got married here oh, about a month ago. We promised him a big dinner, but we haven't got to it yet. The elementary children had to go to Cathedral and the high school children had to go to Palm Springs until 1966 our school was built in Rancho Mirage. It only goes to the sixth grade. Now I may be wrong there, it may be eight grades now. You know, this, I put it down long ago. But I thought I'd forget it. We have two nice shopping centers and an active Chamber of Commerce and a Rancho Mirage Woman's Club. It is a very nice place to live. I wish to thank Mrs. Frank Clancey and Mrs. Evie Malinder and Ben Vallet, Jr. for their help with this information.

Y: What are the names there? I should get those down.

C: Mrs. Evie Malinder, they're not here now. And Ben Vallet, Jr. and Mrs. Frank Clancey. So that's some of it, isn't it?

Y: Now Frank Morgan, was he the man, were they living on

the corner here

C: No, no, they didn't live on the corner. There was a vacant lot between us and then his tulips start, and his house is in the middle of two houses. And they really never stayed here all the time, but they came and lived in the winter, you know. And I just thought he was, of course, you know, he was a sportsman, you know, and all that went with it. But I just liked him so much, and he liked me. And when he took sick and died, why he wanted to go down into Mexico and bring up different trees, you know, that we didn't have, and fill this lot next to me. He wouldn't sell it or anything because, or he wouldn't build on it. But he had two with his house, you know. And he wanted then me to take care of it. I could water it, you know, because I was here all the time. And I could water it. And then it would belong to the two of us, you know. He just wanted to get those trees because he'd been all over Mexico, and he thought there was some down there that were gorgeous, you know. And then he died. So we didn't get the trees. And, of course, they sold the property. He stayed there. He only had one son. And, oh, the minute he'd come down here before he'd even go home, he'd

holler, "Amy, I'm here." (laughter) I've never seen him anymore. You know, his daddy was a rounder, you know. But I liked him.

Y: Now he wasn't the man who was Wizard of Oz?

C: What?

Y: He was not the man who was the Wizard of Oz.

C: I really wouldn't know. All I knew about him was here. And they came over for water when they came to open up the house. See they closed it in the summer. And they came for water. And Dad took and he happened to have some pipe, you know, saved from some of the building. And he said, "Well, you take all the water you want tonight, but I got pipe enough and I'll pipe the water over there and put a faucet on it until you can, you know, get your water turned on." And they came on a Saturday, you know, and there was no Saturday water nor Sunday. But Monday morning he would get his water. So Dad did that and after that, why the houses were back and forth, you know.

Y: You called Rancho Mirage Annex No. 2. What's Annex 2?

C: Well, it was annexed to the Rancho Mirage Rio, you know. It's all from the lights, below the lights, down there when you go down, and all that where the college and all is, is Rancho Mirage Annex. That's why they, Eisenhower

I hate that name, wanted, you know, to be Palm Desert. And we told them they couldn't do it, you know, that's all. And so now they have to acknowledge their, whether they like it or not, they're in Rancho Mirage. Of course, I wouldn't be caught dead in anything called Eisenhower. You wanted to know and so I . . .

Y: Yes.

C: I'm telling you.

Y: Did you know Mr. Dunlap? Was he around when you first moved here?

C: No, no, he just owned that property, and he never did anything with it. He bought it on speculation. And you know the rest of Rancho Mirage. You know where you go down Bob Hope, you know. Years ago they had a, I'm trying to think of his name, and he, they had a man manage the whole thing. There was several people came and bought five acres on speculation, and they didn't build on it, but they came down, they had their tents and they had their camps and all. And they all came down together. I think the last one is Helen Clancey. And she and, of course, Frank Clancey was alive then, you know, and they came down and all camped together and spent their weekends or maybe a whole week down. And

then maybe they'd begin to build on their five acres.

But they bought up all those five acres, but I think the only one left now is Clancey. I may be wrong.

There may be another or so. But Mrs. Clancey still lives on hers. Now, where was we?

Y: Sort of talking about what the outline of Rancho Mirage was, I think.

C: Oh. I've got a whole lot of pages there that I've got to get together, but they go way back.

Y: Oh.

C: Way back in the, I don't know how this come out here.

See, it tells here. This is the father and mother, and when they were born and died. And husband born January 7, 1875 and died 1955. That's my husband. And then the children's dates, you know. And on there's a whole raft of that. It goes back in, I think, the seventeen hundreds.

Y: Gee.

C: (laughter)

Y: Did the Anna Berg estate have much influence on Rancho Mirage?

C: No. No. It didn't. I don't think they wanted any contact at all. They had their people come from the outside. And of course, they had that Shawn's family,

Shaw's family, you know, here. And they, I guess they got so frightened, you know, that they got rid of them. And, but they bought that piece of property and they closed it in, you know, pretty tight. And they never, never enter into anything in Rancho Mirage. Now they might have in clubs, you know, and all, and maybe Palm Springs. But you know, will you believe it, Rancho Mirage is getting the monied people and getting the money here and Palm Springs is stagnant. That's the truth. Well, of course, it's so built up. And, boy, I'm telling you, Rancho Mirage is growing, and growing like mad. See, what was this? Palm Springs here in 1938 was incorporated. And first mayor was Philip Boyd.

Y: Do you remember that?

C: Yes. Oh, yes, I was here. Sure. I was here in twenty some.

Y: Living in Palm Springs.

C: Yes, I lived in Palm Springs. And I never cared for Philip Boyd. All they cared for was Philip Boyd, you know. They didn't care anything about the area where they lived or anything else. I didn't think he even was a good mayor. I got out of Palm Springs because, oh, I don't know why, but I just thought it wasn't a good place

for the children, you know. And then when I found this house, why I bypassed, I still had the house in Palm Springs, but I sold it. Well, now . . .

Y: Where are we now? (laughter) We've talked about so much. I think you answered most of the questions I had. Were you selling real estate at all out in this area?

C: What?

Y: Did you sell real estate out in this area at all?

C: Yes, no, no, more in Cathedral. And in Palm Desert.

There wasn't a whole lot of land for sale. A lot of it was being held, like all of the land up above the belt here, up in there was vacant, you know. And where they put the city hall, which is a rotten place for it and the craziest building you ever saw, why was all vacant, you know. And, of course, if we had a big flood, you know, it would take that whole place with it because it all, the hills up there are this way and that way, you know. And there's no place the water can go but right down there where they put our, what is it, three million city hall.

Y: (laughter)

C: Well, I'm not asleep, you know. I can't do anything, I can know what's going on. And anyway they, of course, we had an awful lot of trouble with out accounts, so they

took and, you know, tried to recall her, you know. And they didn't succeed.

Y: You call her.

C: Yes, we had a woman on the, Mrs. Warner, and they tried to recall her and get her off because, well, the reason there were two men there and that just were right in the developer's grass, you know. And they were just giving them everything, you know. And he had really had two men on the council that he manipulated. And Rowitzer was his name. Well, he took and resigned. I think that he really was ill, and he didn't say so. But I think he was because otherwise he would never have gave it up, you know. And we couldn't get him out because he was from, oh dear, where is the big place up here? Oh . . .

Y: Thunderbird?

C: Big club. No, it wasn't Thunderbird. It was, oh, I don't know.

Y: Tamarisk?

C: No. Not Tamarisk. It's called a club of some kind.

Y: Not a country club though.

C: Yes, it's, well, it takes in one whole section, you know.

We have five districts, and it takes in one whole district, and he was from there. And nobody would go against him

because they couldn't win. Well, he thought that he could take and make an appointment and put in a man. And he got skunked on that, you know, because he was going to put his own man in. And then, of course, Mrs. Warner fought him, you know. And the only two that are worth two bits worth of dog meat is Mrs. Warner and the man that lives over here. Can't think of his name.

Y: Wilson?

C: No, not Wilson. His name is, oh, we fought to get him in. You know, I think that's what put me ill was I have a man that helps me in my public work, you know, and he does anything I want him to. And we went in two districts and never missed a single house. We walked, and he would put the, we would drive the car in and leave it at the head of the block and he took one side and I took the other. And we told them if they were registered, that they could register and vote here. And then when they went home, they could re-register, and register without any trouble in their own home, you see. They could. And so we got everybody, it was two of the biggest areas, we never missed a door. And I walked, you know, and knocked on every door. He took one side of the street and I took the other, and then he would go back and get the car, and

bring the car up to that block. And then we'd do that again. And in the two biggest districts. It was fifth and fourth and fifth, no, we're fourth. Fifth and sixth. Why, the biggest districts, that was the, you know, the country club up there. And the two of them, we never missed a door. We told them what they were going to do. They were going to put a three hundred thousand dollar bond on Rancho Mirage. And they had to vote it, you know.

Y: Was it defeated?

C: It was sure defeated. We kept those two men out, you see. One man we wanted to get back in, and the other man we wanted to get out. And so we worked against him, you know. We took the candidate we had and, sure, we won. But how could you help when you tell them, and tell them the truth. And some way they believed me, you know.

Y: I think when someone is ninety years old covering every block, it's hard not to believe her.

C: (laughter) Well, anyhow, we won. Well, I tell you, it meant just, what it meant was what they wanted was to take all these houses here off and take it and build, you know, other like a club on them, you know. And they just wanted to condemn the houses.

Y: Were you trying to think of Mission Hills, maybe?

C: No. I don't think it was Mission Hills. I don't know.

Mission Hills isn't in Rancho Mirage.

Y: Well, maybe it's in . . .

C: It's in Palm, outside of Palm Springs.

Y: I thought it was Rancho Mirage.

C: I don't think so. Anyway, we won, but it was the three hundred thousand dollar bond issue. And it was to go, mind that, it was go, you know, of I forget how long, twenty years or something like that. Boy, we fought. When we have an election, I have twenty-five people that call me on the phone and say, "Amy, I got my ballot here. How shall I vote?" And I tell them. And they put it down. And I have at least twenty-five that come here and say, "Amy, how shall I vote?" So I'm good for about fifty votes. (laughter)

Y: I get more than that when it comes right down to it.

C: Well, I have fifty that I, of course, I do because there's lots of people I know that are working on the same things I am. But I tell you, I work for the good. I don't work for, I sure don't work for developers, you know. I think developers are all right in their place, but what they want to do is buy up a whole lot of land and then build what they want on it, you know. Now I want to see Rancho

Mirage be a nice place to live, so I do a lot of fighting. (laughter)

Y: Good. I don't think we want to get that lost in there. Maybe we should take that out.

C: What was that? Oh, this was . . .

Y: About Rancho Mirage.

C: Oh, to the school.

Y: Yes.

C: It was a good thing that I made some of these notes, wasn't it?

Y: Yes, really.

C: Well, of course, you know, you really and truly, there's method in my madness because at certain times you can use these things, you know, that happen when you're campaigning.

Y: Right.

C: I guess I'll campaign until I die. Well, last summer you know what happened when I was, I told you I was helpless with the, I had arthritis, you know, or thought I did. I had the pain anyhow. And I had, I run two campaigns. That was the local campaign. We wanted to get one man back in. And, of course, they were fighting him because he voted for the good of the city, you know. And the one woman, they had a recall against her. And that's when we

went door to door. By george, we never missed a door in those two areas. And we told them, we said, "Are you voting here? If you're voting someplace else, you can vote here, and then when you go home you can re-register, you know. And this is your property." I have a piece I wrote in there, Wake Up, I had it in the paper, Wake Up, Rancho Mirage. (laughter) I said, Wake up, you've got a nice place to live. And I went on, I've got it written somewhere there. Put it in the paper. But anyhow, they, I think really that was one thing that, you know, got me really ill because I worked too hard. We went to door to door, but we won.

Y: That's what you wanted.

C: (laughter) That's what I wanted. I never regretted it. We got a good council up there now. Of course, they fight her all the time, but she has the man that I wanted to get back in with her, too, you know. And, of course, with her, I fought the . . . Now this year, I think, in June, she has to run again.

Y: Did you work with Dr. Hudson when he was trying to get Rancho Mirage incorporated?

C: No. I knew who he was, but I didn't, no.

Y: Just curious. You must have watched the growth of Palm

Desert then.

C: Oh yes. Palm Desert wasn't anything hardly at all when I came here. And, of course, Rancho Mirage, you know, was only a drop on the road, you know. But they, of course, there was always that feeling of fight because they wanted us, you know. They wanted it one city, and we didn't want anything to do with Palm Desert. And we still don't. They're a different type of people. They're different people entirely. There's nothing wrong with them. But they're just different, and we had an idea they wanted to shove all their dregs over onto us, which I think was true, you know. But now, by golly, you can't say anything about Rancho Mirage. She's got the money, she's got the people, you know. She's got everything. She really has.

Y: Were you very much involved or aware of the growth of Thunderbird, that whole area up there?

C: Yes.

Y: That's a part of Rancho Mirage?

C: Yes, it's part of Rancho Mirage, but, no, I wasn't. Only that we had to, you know, they're in Rancho Mirage. And the voting, of course, we, you know, watched. And I had friends in every district. I had people working. And

when it comes to the voting, you know, I have people on the phone all the time, five or six of them on the phone.

Y: Where was the first bank here? Where did you go to bank?

C: I opened, I broke the ribbon, cut the ribbon, that opened the bank. It was called the Rancho Mirage Bank.

Y: When was this?

C: Oh, boy, I got it somewhere.

Y: Fifty?

C: Oh, I don't know.

Y: Well, I can find out. It's okay. Just tell me a little about it. What it was like.

C: Well, the, I think that I got it right here. It must be in my, here, it must be in this.

Y: Okay.

C: This is the . . . see, here, wait a minute now. I've never been idle, you know. (laughter)

Y: That I could see. Oh, it's probably over here then. Is this what you're referring to?

C: Yes, you look and see. I'm sure it's in there because I was proud of that.

Y: What kind of a bank was it?

C: Wait a minute and I'll tell you. Did you find where it is?

Y: Not yet.

C: It's in there. Must be.

Y: The bank isn't around anymore, is it?

C: Oh, yes, but it's a trust.

Y: First trust.

C: First trust, they bought it now.

Y: Is it in the same place as the first one?

C: Yes, oh, yes. It's in the same building. Yes. Now,
let's see. Here tells the stuff I did.

Y: Oh here it is. Cut the ribbon to open Rancho Mirage First
National Bank February 12, 1970.

C: Yes. That's all down. See, these are all the things I
did. Yes. Well, I didn't push my way. I never went
and demanded to do this or do that. They always come
for me. I told you that I, this summer, when I was, you
know, I couldn't even make my hair, I took and run two
campaigns. The campaign to kill the recall on Mrs.
Warner, and run one to get in, back in. He was
running for his office. She was running to save it, you
know. And I did it on the telephone. But one with both
of them. I just won't be beat.

Y: What offices did Governor Pat Brown rely on you to help
him in terms of selection of . . .

C: Selection on all the post offices and the, let's see, what else.

Y: Throughout Riverside County or where?

C: Oh, no, no, no. In the desert area. I'm known in the county and I'm known in the state and I'm known in the Washington. I have lots of friends in Washington. You saw where one of them had sent my, you know, that piece, you know, and had it read before the entire group, you know. But I've known him for years. Oh, on the candidates. Of course, he didn't, now like with the lieutenant governor and the different, like the assessor, not assessor. I don't care anything about the assessor. The Senate, you know, and the Assembly. Now I worked for them. I worked for them because, I worked for all the Democrats, you see. And, oh, I've got letters by the hundreds. I've got a book in there that thick with just letters. It would take you months. (laughter) And I would just say, well, of course, to Brown and then also, you know, I went up higher. If I wanted to, I went to the top. I got a letter from Carter, a Christmas letter, from Carter. I don't even like him. (laughter) The letter is in there.

Y: That's great!

C: No, I'm going to go for Ted. I love . . . I worked for

John and I worked for . . . and the night that they killed the other boy, the night, I had a meeting for him. And they threatened to kill him on the phone. I took the phone call and, oh, I was just frightened to death, you know. And it was early. You see, we couldn't get ahold of him because he'd already left Los Angeles and he hadn't got to Riverside yet. But we had to go down and put the chairs in there and they said, "Amy, what can we do?" "Amy, what can we do?" And I said, "Get every piece of furniture out of this room so they can't hide the gun. They can't sit and hold the gun in their lap." I said, "Get every piece out." We just brought all that furniture in, and by golly, you never saw anybody work. And I took and lifted them, too. They were chairs, you know. And afterwards and I had another meeting in that hall, I couldn't lift that chair. But I brought them out there and put them down. And they said they were going to shoot him. And so when he comes, this was not Ted, it was . . .

Y: Edward?

C: Edward, sure. And I worked for John, and I'd worked for Ted, not Ted, I can't think sometimes. And anyhow, I said to them, "Get all this stuff out." I said, "I've just got a phone call. We can't get ahold of him. It's

no use. And we will just take and get clear the hall anyhow." And I said, "If you think there's anybody," I called the cop. And, you know, and told him to come and stay in the meeting. And I said, "If you see anybody, by golly," I said to him, "that you think is going to shoot him, you shoot him first." (laughter) You shoot him, I said. So anyhow, I was scared to death. Oh, I just thought he was, you know, the whole Kennedy family, I liked. And so we made the meeting short. We were really afraid that it would come up, you know, and in a hall that way, you're just helpless. And I'll bet you there wasn't a gun only on the policeman, you know. We didn't have a gun for anything. And so we held the meeting, and then we decided, or he decided, that we'd go around the different towns and, you know, have a little parade and just two or three cars. And then we'd stop wherever there was a group, you know, and talk to them. And everybody loved him. Everybody. Nobody said or did anything or not a word or anything, you know. And I sat, they had an open car, and I sat in the back behind him. The others wouldn't sit there, you know. And I sat right straight behind him. You know, I didn't know. Maybe I'd get a bullet in my back, but anyway, it wouldn't go through him. And so we went all around Redlands and San Bernardino

and everywhere there was a crowd, we said, this is Ted Kennedy, you know, and to vote for him. And he'd make a little speech. And we thought we were safer than in the hall, you know. We stayed in the hall awhile. And then that was on a Thursday, and on a Tuesday they shot him and killed him in Los Angeles. It isn't all pleasant, you know. And, you know, you work with people like that. I worked with him, you see, when his brother was running. And I worked for his brother, and now I'm working for Ted. And, you know, you think a lot of him, or you wouldn't spend your money and your time. And never in all my life have I taken one cent for anything that I have did in my campaign work. No telephones. If I want a telephone, I telephone and I pay for it. I've never collected for a telephone call. I've never collected a nickel from anybody from anything. And I would say I take and fight for who I want to. I don't owe them anything. And there isn't a candidate, a Democratic candidate, that don't go to me. That's the truth. But I'm my own boss. My phone bills have been big lots of times, but when I needed a phone, I used the phone. That's why I'm not rich today. I don't care. I'll tell you, it was my life. Of course, you know, my grandfather

but you know he and my father were Republicans. Of course, the women weren't in politics, you know, when I was little. I got mad is why I went into politics. We all went, I'm terribly fond of ice. I just . . . One time there was a party and . . .

Y: We're talking right now about Paul Kersten who had property here in Rancho Mirage. And you were talking a little bit about what his background is.

C: Yes. Do you want me to talk now? Why he came from Germany here, and he started and he sold trade, and that was what they called then the iron munger. And the man came from Germany and been raised making it. And that was making things with just plain iron and he really made a fortune that way or very good money anyhow. And so then he heard about the desert and he was interested in it. He was married, of course, and I think Paul was about sixteen at that time, his son, Paul, Jr. And so he bought, I think it was two hundred and eighty acres, and he took, it was just one sand hill, you know, after another, so he went and bought all the machinery to level it. And he leveled it himself. And then he began to take and improve it, you know. He got, I think it was grapes he had and he had dates, and he built, he finally had two houses built on it. And he owned it

until just a short time ago. And then he's passed away now, you know. But he was the boy from Germany, and it was a beautiful ranch.

Y: How much did he purchase it for?

C: Fifty cents, fifty dollars, an acre, but it was just one sand hill after another. But instead of hiring somebody, you know, he was the good German, you know, why he went and got the, bought the machinery and did the work himself. And he enjoyed it. He really enjoyed his ranch.

Y: Did your husband help him at all?

C: Well, my husband was a builder-contractor. And everybody knew him, and he did very beautiful work. And so he came over to see us. And the two families, there was only the one boy in that family, and we became very close friends. And then when he began to improve the ranch and build, why Mr. Croft built the houses and built the, you know, big shed after they were, you know, had a date farm. Why he built a big shed where they could sort the dates, you know, and dispose of them. And we became very close friends and the boy finished his school. He was graduated, you know. And he, then he came home from when he finished his education, why he came back here and

helped his father on the ranch. And he married my daughter. And they live down in Indio and have three wonderful boys. And they, of course, he never quit. I mean, Mr. Kersten never quit improving the ranch, you know, and making something out of it. And but he did sell some of it before he sold the whole thing. He sold ten acres that was on, would this be what end, this way, south.

Y: Southeast.

C: East is that? The end of the place he sold the ten acres. It was quite long ago to a doctor because he thought it was a good idea, I think, to have a doctor in the area, you know. And that's about all I know. Only that it was a very beautiful place.

Y: You have an interesting article here on him which says that he bought a half section of what he figured was good land for growing and moved out an old hangar from the Palm Springs Airport for living quarters.

C: For heaven sake, I really didn't know that. I remembered it, but, I mean I didn't remember it.

Y: He knew absolutely nothing about ranching or farming, but still had courage enough to tackle it. Let's see, next he dug a well, leveled the land himself and planted the

very first grapes in this section.

C: Yes, he did. That's interesting. Would you like to take that off onto the, some of it off onto here?

Y: Oh, it's just a few little parts here. Courage, vision and plenty of hard work had their results and now thirteen years later Paul has the only and the finest, most modern, air-conditioned shed in Coachella Valley.

C: And Mr. Croft built it.

Y: Right.

C: (laughter)

Y: Do you remember the time when he was helping?

C: Oh, yes. Of course. It wasn't so long ago, you know. Of course, oh dear, time goes so fast. I guess Kathryn and Paul must be married about twenty-nine years, I guess. So, but Mr. Kersten hasn't been dead so long. I think it's maybe a little over two years now. And he was one fine man, one fine Democrat.

Y: Let's talk a little bit about that.

C: Cameron, let me think a minute.

Y: Okay.

C: Why they, what's his name?

Y: Hank Gogerty.

C: Hank Gogerty. Hank Gogerty, well, he was a big man here

and he a ranch over there in the same area. And it tells you there that the pipe, aeration system broke down, and so Paul, Sr., went over and he got pipe and run a pipe from his ranch to Gogerty's ranch and watered the whole thing while Frank was gone. That is true. I remember that. He came over here and told Dad about it, Mr. Croft.

Y: That's great. Did he do other things like that?

C: Oh, yes. He was very good neighbor and he was a very good man. And a knowledgeable man. And he was very generous, too, in helping, you know, like with somebody that was ill or anything, you know. He's always put in. He was a fine person. I guess that's about all right . . .

John Tunney was an attorney in Riverside, and his secretary was a personal friend of mine. And she called me on the phone and made an appointment that John, his name then was Verrick, and that he would come down and wanted to talk to me because he wanted to run for Congressman. I said that would be fine. Have him come. And so he came down, he got down here about ten-thirty in the morning. And I had never met him. And so the first thing I said to him when he sat down, "Don't you have another name, but Verrick?" And he said, "Oh, oh, I wouldn't do anything about that name." He said, "It was my mother's name." I

suppose her maiden name, you know. And I said, "Oh, well, you never can get elected with a name like that." I said, "The Democrats won't remember it, and the Republicans will make hash out of it." And so we talked awhile and I told him I'd be glad to help him. And I took him, or he took me in his car, and I took him to, we had several Democratic clubs, you know, here at that time. And I took him to the clubs and introduced him, and then I took him to some big businessmen and we spent until we got back about two o'clock. And he went back to Riverside. And that was on a Thursday. And on a Monday, why his secretary called me again and she said, I said, "Well, what can I do for you?" And she said, "Well, John wants to come down and talk to you this morning from Riverside, you know." And that's how he become John Tunney. It was his middle name. And, of course, it was my favorite name. I had three or four grandsons named John after their grandfather, you know. And that was his name, John. So that's how he came. And I was going to tell you about Airwan was just being built, the Airwan Hotel. And it was and is a beautiful place. And I was so thrilled with it. And I wanted to give a dinner, so I went and talked to them and they told

me the day they were going to open and that I could have an eight-dollar dinner for five dollars. And so that was fine, and I said I will take a third of the, it was an upstairs, the big room, you know, for meetings and for dinners. And you could divide it in three sections. So I said I would like the first section as you go up. So that day, she said, yes, and so the next morning I called her and I said, "I would like the middle section also." And she said, "All right." And the next day I went and said to her, "I've got to have the whole upstairs" because I was getting so many reservations. And this was the first affair that John had in the desert here, or had anywhere. That was his first one in his campaign. And so that was the opening of the Airwan. And, of course, I've always had a real soft spot in my heart for that hotel. And the funny thing about it was we had a hundred and sixty-five people. And all I made, you know, over and above the expenses was fifteen dollars. But the reason that was the people, there were about a hundred and sixty-five there, why, was there were so many candidates, Democratic candidates, running. And you always invite them as a guest, you know. And they really would have come out all together, the fifteen dollars I

made was on the drinks. And, of course, John and I became, you know, very close friends and I think the world of him. And some day I hope to see him in the White House.

Y: Now this article looks like it has something to do with migrant workers. Did you

C: Yes. Well, let's see, let me see. Farmer Labor Advancement Group, the four county projects will provide basic education for the farm workers. You see, when the farmers and they brought in this immigrant people to work, there was always some kind of friction one way or the other that something had to be taken care of. And this is 1965.

Y: Were you involved in those issues?

C: Oh, yes. I was involved in everything. (laughter) Anybody has a difficulty, they come call me.

Y: Why did you bring Schreiber to the area?

C: Well, for . . . we bring them . . . at that time we had a lot of Democratic clubs and we were having meetings. And the CDC was very, very important at that time and very influential. And we always tried to get, when we would give a big dinner, why we tried to get them, you know, important people to it in order to get the people

there on our fund raisers. And we usually did. And that's how . . . and it was a very funny thing, but they took a picture of Schreiber and me. And one paper put it out, Amy Croft giving Schreiber hell. He really came to see if he could straighten out some of the things that was bothering, between the growers and the workers, you know. And that's what we got him down for. He's a very knowledgeable, very lovely person. And I wasn't saying anything out of the road to him. But one thing you go all through any of these interviews and you'll always see thanks for something I did to start them. See. Because that's the way that I helped them and held them. And I'm good now for about fifty votes. About twenty-five will call me and ask me to tell them how to run their, you know, ballot. And about twenty-five will call me and say, how should I vote? (laughter) And I tell you, sometimes you get in trouble, and in a way I'm in trouble right now. They asked me if I would, I was sick on my back and then I went into the hospital, and they asked me if they could use my name for McCandless. And I said, yes, that was all right. He was a good man. And, Lord, they soaked me with an eighty-dollar bill that he seems he won't even notice for advertising, so I sent him quite

a hot letter. And told him, I said, you take care of it. It wasn't mine. I didn't, you know, call the paper. I'm not going to pay it. I sent him one before. I thought some time today I was going to call the paper and just tell them. I'm not going to pay his eighty dollars.

Y: This was the Enterprise?

C: No, it was the news in, the Daily News.

Y: Oh, the Daily News.

C: Yes. I have one book in there that's very interesting.

It's a lot of the pictures of the inauguration in Washington. And you see that's what I'm heading for now. I'm going the eighteenth of this month, I'm going, they're having it in San Francisco. Never before had, they always had it at the capitol. But they're having a meeting in San Francisco and I'm nominated to the State Central Committee. I've been on it off and on, but not right lately. But I was . . . This is what I'm talking about. Thank you so much for coming to see me in Coachella last week. And everyone of them will thank you so much for your letter. (laughter) You know. That's the first word of all of them. This is from John Tunney. And . . .

Y: That was from Tunney.

C: Who? This is Tunney. This is from, that's John. I guess

I put a lot of John's in here. I have an idea, you see, I have an idea of getting Kennedy in. And if Kennedy gets in, John will be Attorney General. And John can be Attorney General for eight years, two terms, and then we can shove John into the, I probably won't be here, but he'll be shoved into the White House. I still haven't given up.

Y: Well, you'll only be a hundred by that time. (laughter)

C: I've written down below . . . Oh, June's husband. That was my June, my oldest daughter's, husband. I think he was one of the greatest men that ever lived. But he just couldn't live after June went. He just couldn't take it. And it wasn't three months, we buried him. I write here, John came to me before he ran and I took him to the important people in the area. I asked him to use his middle name instead of Verrick, which was his mother's maiden name. This, I guess, was one of the last letters with the name Verrick. His other name was John, a name I loved. And here it says, Verrick Tunney. (laughter)

Y: How did you happen to become a Democrat?

C: Well, it was very simple and very foolish, in a way. I was seven years old and we lived in Downey in a little town. And there was one ice house. Downey was just a

little dot on the road at that time. And, let's see, eighty-eight, and eight would be what, 1890. Well, we came in 1890, and no,

Y: 1896, you mean.

C: It would be 1896. Well, it was just a little bit place.

Y: Where was this?

C: In Downey, California. Just twelve miles from Los Angeles. And I read in one of the pieces on me that I had, we had gone to live in Long Beach. And we did. We lived in Long Beach two years and it had absolutely gone from my mind, you know. And but the minute I read it in this old, it was, you know, a write-up. I knew it was right that we did, we did go to Long Beach. And I was always just crazy about Long Beach, and still am. And but anyhow, we had an ice house, just one, and the man had an ice wagon, you know. And he furnished everybody. And I never heard the word refrigerator at that time. There wasn't any refrigerator. You fixed a box, you know, and put your ice in it. And bought it, you know, by the piece. And, of course, some pieces got broke and they just left them to melt, you know, in the thing. So when the kids come from school, a little girl whose father run this business, why would take us there and we'd all get a piece

of ice out of the bottom of the truck. And I loved ice. I just, all my life, they claim that I said at a party when they were asking, you know, what couldn't you get along with, what is the one thing that, if everything else went that you'd want to keep, and I said ice.

(laughter) So anyhow, she, evidently, her parents, it was Bryan and McKinley, you know, that was running, and evidently her father and mother had been discussing it. I don't know, or something because she had it in her head, you know, and so she said, and my father was a Republican and my grandfather, you know, he was a national senator from Kentucky. And then when he came here, why he, they made him a senator of California. And he also, he was counsel for the Southern Pacific Railroad until just before he died, fifty years. And so he was Republican, too, so that's all I heard at home. But she said, well, only Republicans can have any ice this morning. You can't have any ice unless you were Republican. And I said to her, that made me angry, who should tell me what I should be, you know. And I said, well, I'm a Democrat. And I don't want your Republican ice. And I never went back, never went back, and never got a piece of ice from that girl again. And so when I went home, I climbed up on the

bed and my father, he was an invalid, and I said, Daddy, I'm a Democrat. And he said, oh, what brought that on. And I said, well, I just got mad and I didn't want to eat their old Republican ice, I said, and I'm not a Republican. And he thought about it for a minute, and I don't think he particularly liked it, but he thought what it would do to my grandfather. And my grandfather was mother's father, you know. And every once in awhile they'd have something, you know, on the other, you know. Not ugly, but just a poke, you know. And so he said, well, okay. You're a Democrat, you're a Democrat. He said, but they're not very good. And so when Grandpa came, he always come to see Dad, and he said, Dad, my father, called me Sunday. . My father called me Sunshine. That's where that came in the paper. He called me Sunshine. And my grandfather called me Mint. I was the mint in the Julep. And so he said to my grandfather, he said, Sunshine has something to tell you. And he said, go ahead and tell him what you told me. And he thought, you know, that Grandfather would really be upset, you know, and he wanted to see it. So I told him; I said, I'm a Democrat. And Grandfather was never one that would talk a lot, you know, so I just left it. And he looked at me for a minute like I'd hit him,

you know, in the stomach. And he said, oh. And I said, yes, I'm a Democrat. I don't like Republicans, I said to him. And so he put his hand on my shoulder and he said, That's all right, Mint. And don't let anybody ever change your convictions. But he didn't need to say it. (laughter) But that's how I become a Democrat. And that was Bryan and I was out with pamphlets and I was only seven years old. (laughter)

Y: You've been a strong Democrat ever since.

C: Yes. And never went or worked for only one Republican. And that was McGahee, and I got him a judgeship here. And I'm going to tell you, he was the only honest judge that this area has ever had. It's the truth. They're a bunch of crooks. That's the truth, too. And he was an honest man. And, you know, he only lived two years after I got him in. And he was honest. He was a good man. If I can pick up a book, of course, I'd like to show you the pictures of the inauguration.

Y: Good! We're going to talk a little about Frank Morgan.

C: Yes, I'd like to. We had just moved in this house about a week or so before and got settled. And some one come to the door and knocked about after dark. And they asked if they could have some water. And it was Frank Morgan

and his wife. And I said, "Oh, surely you can," and I had an electric, not electric lamp, but a lamp, you know, that you could just light. And they didn't have any lights on. And so I said, "Well, I'll give you that light, you know, to take with you." And we became real great friends. And a scheme that he had. There was a vacant lot between us. And his house was built on two lots. I'll tell you a little something now that happened. They would give him, he would go to a new division and they would give him a lot for almost nothing if he would build a house on it. And he did. And I don't know what he did with his other house. But he owned this one, and a beautiful house on two lots. And then he owned a lot between him and I. And he wanted to go to Mexico and to get, there was so many trees down there that we don't have, you know, beautiful trees. And he wanted to take his lot and go down to Mexico and bring those trees up here and plant them on his lot so that they could, you know, get the trees growing in the United States. And he wanted me to water them because he wasn't here only now and then. And so I agreed. And when he died, why that was what his plan was, and he was going to Mexico and arrange to bring the plants in, you know. And there was

quite a lot to do about it because they had to be let come in. And I was to look after them and water them, and he was to put the trees in.

Y: What did you just say?

C: You were asking me about Potential. He was the chief, the Indian chief here when I came, and they owned everything on the far side of Indian Avenue, you know, the whole section. And see, the Indians owned every other section in this area. And now they can sell it or do anything they want with it, but then they couldn't do anything. And they really had a real hard time. And Francisco was the Indian chief. And they had a house that was, you know, made of sticks and, oh, leaves and everything, you know, that they gathered in. And I used to go to their meetings to find out what their problems were and all. And I went to Washington. The water company that we, every drop of water, we used in Palm Springs came off of Indian land, come down from the mountains. And they had just one, you know, faucet there. And if they didn't pay the dollar, they turned the water off on him. The water they got off the Indian land. So I went to Washington and got them the water pipes down right to their area into the Indian's area, and it came down right

down from came in an open box from
and then went to the reservation. And then I made another
fight and got that water piped into the reservation. I
looked after the Indians, and it was one continual fight.

Y: You were telling me over the phone about some doctor in
Palm Springs that you went to.

C: Dr. Stillman, and she surely ought to be in that historic
book.

Y: I don't think it was Dr. Stillman. We talked about that
the last time. This was something like McCastle or
something like that.

C: Wait a minute. What?

Y: I don't know. You were talking about that over the phone
and I can't remember. It was some doctor in Palm Springs
that you also went to bat for, or against, I can't remember
which.

C: Let me think. I don't . . .

Y: Okay.

C: Well, it was at the election, and this man was to be put
back in. He was already had been in for a term in the
council.

Y: Who is this?

C: His name is Tevis, Lloyd Tevis. And he's mayor pro tem

in Palm Desert.

Y: Oh, Rancho Mirage.

C: No, Rancho Mirage. And so anyhow, they wanted, they had a recall on the woman that was the only woman on the council and so she was good, but the man, one of the men there, he was a mess, Howitzer his name was. And so I have a man that helps me. He's a Democrat like I am, and he's interested. And so we, in the Fourth and Fifth Districts, she was in the Fourth, that's my district, he was in the Fifth District, which is across the wash, and we went door to door and never missed a door. And we told them that if they were registered somewhere else where they had their summer home, you know, why they could register here and then re-register when they got back. So we got every one of them to register and we never missed a door in those two areas. And I tell you, frankly, I think that's what, it was too much for me, and I had my sick spell. But I'm all right now.

Y: We'll talk about it next time. (laughter)

C: Well, I love to have you here.

Y: Good! We'll make it another . . .

C: Wouldn't you like a cup of coffee?

Y: No, thanks.

C: You're not coffee drinker.

Y: No.

C: Tea?

Y: I sort have given it up over the last year because it hasn't settled well. I adore it, but I just find I better not have it.

C: I won't tempt you then.

Y: How come on your shoe?

C: Oh, is it caught on it?

Y: Yes. Oh, underneath your shoe.

C: Well, you got that about Paul Kersten.

Y: Yes, got that one.

C: Yes, I think that was very good. There was something else. I think I made a note of that.

Y: Oh, good.

C: Let's see.

Y: That's what you wrote down today. That's probably not it.

C: Yes, it is. Well, the end of Palm Springs, they, a man by the, he was an attorney in Los Angeles, and he lent an actress, I can't remember her name, the money to build the *Tahquitz* Hotel. And she wasn't a success and didn't make any money, so after awhile he had to go into court and he took over the *Tahquitz* Hotel. And he and my

brother, my brother's name was *Alvin* Ball, why were in, he was an attorney. But they were in the oil, you know, sinking wells and prospecting in the oil goop, and they were making a good deal of money. And so he asked me, they had this hotel and they were having trouble with the help. So he asked me if I would make the pastry for him until he could get a, you know, pastry chef. And I think that I worked there almost a year. He didn't try, you know, and he was, I did it and of course I got well paid for it, but I did it because he was a friend of my brother. And he finally he sold that hotel. It was Hotel *Del Tahquitz* and now the hotel has been torn down and other buildings put on there. But it was right on Palm Canyon Drive.

Y: Do you know where?

C: Yes, I do know, but I don't know the exact name. I could get that for you.

Y: That's okay.

C: And so, of course, that was when Palm Springs, you know, was a lot, I've been in this house, you see, thirty-six years. So that was quite a long time ago. But I thought it was, and he bought some property then over in Desert Hot Springs. And I think that both and he and his wife

are gone now. And I think his daughter still lives over there.

Y: You had another note on the other side.

C: What's that? Tell about every other week I would hire a . . . oh, yes, this was important. See, I make, you know, I told you about the Dr. Stillman and I having the cafeteria. And what we had done, we'd bought the equipment and everything and had it going. And I know that I told you at one time we had four hundred dollars, you know, in the bank. And when the school wanted to take it over entirely, the women in Palm Springs, and that was right, I did have four hundred dollars. But I didn't tell you where I got it. The school gave me the auditorium every other week. And the Saturday night, and I hired a band, different bands, and we gave a dance. And the money from that dance was what kept that cafeteria going, you know. And they, I kept absolute books on it, you know, and when the women came to see, I guess we were getting rich, you know, why one of the women here, I won't name her, but anyway, she looked at the book. I took it over and said, there's the books and everything is in it. And you can look at it on this table. But you can't take it out of this room. And so she looked at it, and she said, "Well, it's one of the finest bookkeeping that I have ever

seen. She said. She thought we were using it haphazard, you know. But they, I would get the band in from outside and I wanted to tell you that the El Mirador was the only you know hotel here then. And no place, there wasn't a single room where people, you know, could congregate, didn't dance, except the school hall. And so the school gave me, you know, let me have that hall. And we charged a dollar apiece, you know, two dollars a couple, and, oh, we had a crowd every Saturday night. Because there wasn't any place else that they could go and dance. And I thought that would be interesting.

Y: That is.

C: You see, I wrote it down . . .